

**ANNUAL REPORT
OF THE
NORTHWEST INDIANA TRANSPORTATION
STUDY COMMISSION**



**Indiana Legislative Services Agency
200 W. Washington Street, Suite 301
Indianapolis, Indiana 46204**

November, 2001

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2001

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James Sperlik
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A copy of this report is available on the Internet. Reports, minutes, and notices are organized by committee. This report and other documents for this Committee can be accessed from the General Assembly Homepage at <http://www.state.in.us/legislative/>.

I. STATUTORY DIRECTIVE

The Northwest Indiana Transportation Study Commission was established by P.L. 149-1999 (SEA 272), and amended by HEA 1852-2001 to:

1. Monitor the development of commuter transportation and rail service in the Lowell-Chicago and Valparaiso-Chicago corridors;
2. Study all aspects of regional mass transportation and road and highway needs in Lake County, Porter County, LaPorte County, St. Joseph County, and Elkhart County; and
3. Study other topics as assigned by the legislative council.

The Commission is required to submit a final report of its findings and recommendations to the legislative council by November 1, 2003.

II. LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL DIRECTIVE

The Northwest Indiana Transportation Study Commission was assigned these additional charges by the Legislative Council:

1. Study the revenues and expenditures of the Indiana toll road, planned improvements to the toll road, toll road operations, and the feasibility of renewing efforts to enhance the toll road through public improvements and highway improvements in the counties in which the toll road passes (SR 19, authored by Senator Riegsecker); and
2. Evaluate air transportation issues and identify all possible funding sources available to the Gary/Chicago Airport (HR 61, authored by Representative C. Brown, Representative Aguilera, Representative Dumezich, Representative Harris, Representative Kuzman, Representative Dobis, Representative L. Lawson, and Representative V. Smith).

III. SUMMARY OF WORK PROGRAM

The Commission met four times during the 2001 interim session, as follows:

1. The first meeting was held on August 29, 2001, and was devoted to the topic of the Gary/Chicago Airport.
2. The second meeting was held on September 13, 2001, and was devoted to the topics of high speed rail, the Regional Transportation Committee of Lake County, the Northwestern Indiana Regional Planning Commission, and State Road 49 issues.
3. The third meeting was held on September 25, 2001, and was devoted to the topic

of the Gary/Chicago Airport.

4. The fourth meeting was held on October 25, 2001, was devoted to the topic of the toll road, and considered proposed legislation for the 2002 legislative session.

IV. SUMMARY OF TESTIMONY

This interim report is a general summary of the testimony and comments received by the Commission. Meeting minutes for the Commission can be accessed from the General Assembly Homepage at

<http://www.state.in.us/legislative/interim/committee/nitc>.

A. First Meeting (August 29, 2001)

The meeting was held at Indiana University Northwest, Gary, Indiana.

The Commission heard testimony from Scott King, Mayor of Gary, Indiana, concerning the importance of continued support and utilization of the Gary/Chicago Airport. Duane Dedelow, Mayor of Hammond, Indiana, expressed his and his city's support for the airport. William Staehle, president of the Gary/ Chicago Airport Board of Authority, and Paul Karas, Administrator of the Gary/Chicago Airport, discussed present and future plans for the airport. Robert Hauer spoke as a representative of eastern Will County, Illinois, residents opposed to the construction of an airport in Peotone, Illinois.

B. Second Meeting (September 13, 2001)

The meeting was held at Purdue University-North Central Campus, Valparaiso, Indiana.

Roger Sims, P.E., testified concerning the status of high speed rail and future plans for its expansion, and Larry Goode, of the Indiana Department of Transportation (INDOT) informed the Commission about the outreach meetings around the state on this topic. Dr. Dennis Rittenmeyer advised the Commission concerning the Lake County Regional Transportation Committee. Dan Gardner of the Northwestern Indiana Regional Planning Commission spoke concerning the transportation projects included in its Vision 2020 Plan.

Various representatives of INDOT informed the Commission of the resurfacing project on State Road 49. Testimony was received from members of the public concerning the State Road 49 renovation.

C. Third Meeting (September 25, 2001)

The meeting was held at Indiana University Northwest, Gary, Indiana.

The Commission heard testimony from Harold Miles, of the Portage Chamber of Commerce, concerning the need for an airport in the area. It also heard from Dr. William Staehle, of the Gary/Chicago Airport Authority, commenting on recent developments at the airport. A letter of support for the Airport from Representative Peter Visclosky was entered into the record.

Gerald Hanas and John Parsons of the Northern Indiana Commuter Transportation District (NICTD) testified regarding operations of NICTD. Kathy Noland of INDOT appeared with an update concerning its present and future projects, as requested at the September 13, 2001 meeting.

D. Fourth Meeting (October 25, 2001)

This meeting was held at the Northwestern Indiana Regional Planning Commission, Portage, Indiana.

The Commission discussed potential legislation regarding the Gary/Chicago Airport Authority (Senator Rogers) and the Indiana High Speed Rail Association (Senator Landske). The Commission expressed its consensus as to continued support for the Lowell-Chicago and Valparaiso-Chicago corridors.

A letter of support from Senator Evan Bayh for the Gary/Chicago Airport was made a part of the record. Paul Karas of the Gary/Chicago Airport requested consideration of an earlier funding request for the airport. The Commission, while aware of the state's financial constraints, expressed its support for a funding request from the Gary/Chicago Airport.

The Commission heard testimony from Diana Hamilton and Steffanie Rhinesmith of the Indiana Transportation Finance Authority concerning the Indiana Toll Road and its revenues and expenses. Sam Wolfe of the Toll Road and David Holtz of INDOT spoke concerning repairs and future capital projects needed for the Indiana Toll Road.

V. COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS

At its fourth meeting, the Commission voted to approve the following items:

A. PD 3492 (2002), concerning the membership of the Gary airport authority, authored by Senator Rogers.

B. Resolution 20021591.001, authored by Senator Landske, with the deletion of lines 13 and 14, the deletion of "wishes to encourage" in line 20 and the insertion of "encourages", the deletion of "wishes to encourage" in line 22 and the insertion of "encourages", and the deletion of lines 27 through 29.

C. The continuation of discussion of commuter transportation and rail service in the

Lowell-Chicago and Valparaiso-Chicago corridor.

D. The importance of continued funding for expansion plans at the Gary/Chicago airport, but as the Commission is aware of the state's current financial situation, it will consider forwarding a funding request for the airport to the General Assembly at the earliest opportunity.

E. A recognition of support for the Regional Transportation Committee of Lake County, although the Commission is aware that a funding mechanism for the Regional Transportation Commission has not yet been decided.

However, as a majority of the Commission members were not in attendance at the fourth meeting, the Commission may not recommend a final bill draft (SECTION 11 of Legislative Council Resolution 01-3.)